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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TIRANA 000272

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/29/2019  
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [OSCE](#) [AL](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES ODIHR ELECTION OBSERVATION  
MISSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

Classified By: Ambassador John L. Withers, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador Withers told Foreign Minister Basha on April 30 that the U.S. is surprised by Albanian objections to Dame Audrey Glover's appointment as Head of the upcoming ODIHR Election Observation Mission to Albania. He cautioned the FM against Albania setting an unfortunate precedent of member countries trying to influence ODIHR/OSCE nominations - a precedent the U.S., OSCE and others are keen to avoid. FM Basha outlined Albania's "strong objection" to Glover's appointment, claiming that although the GOA has "nothing personal" against Glover or her qualifications, the GOA is convinced that because Glover headed ODIHR at the time of the badly flawed 1996 Albanian presidential elections, her appointment would "open the door to an ugly period in our history." Basha gave little indication of any willingness to budge, and instead asked for U.S. help to find a "quiet solution" by reaching out the British and others - a request the Ambassador declined. Immediately following the meeting, Head of the OSCE Mission to Albania Robert Bosch telephoned Ambassador Withers and said that ODIHR will go head with the Glover appointment, believing that Albania has no authority to object to her appointment. END SUMMARY.

FM Basha: "It's Nothing Personal"

12. (C) The Ambassador opened the meeting by outlining the U.S. position that Albania's seeking to influence the Glover appointment would set dangerous precedent, one that would be eagerly seized upon by other countries far more critical of ODIHR than Albania. The Ambassador said Albania's reaction had surprised the U.S., and said the fact that Glover headed ODIHR at the time of the 1996 Albanian elections and the ensuing very negative ODIHR report on the elections is not justification for the GOA to object to her appointment now.

13. (C) Basha told Ambassador Withers that the GOA has "nothing personal" against Glover, and does not contest her qualifications or background. Instead, Basha insisted, the opposition and media would use the Glover appointment to "reopen the drawer" of 1996, a period Basha described as "the absolute low point" of Albanian-ODIHR relations". Basha recalled that following the ODIHR report on the 1996 presidential elections, ODIHR was not allowed back to Albania to observe the 1996 local elections, because relations between the GOA and ODIHR had sunk to such lows. Basha said that the opposition, media and Albanian public would inevitably see Glover's appointment as a vote of no confidence in the GOA's ability to carry out a good election, claiming "if I were in the opposition, that's what I would do too." Basha said that of all the people available to ODIHR, no other "has a bigger link to the dark days of 1996."

14. (C) Basha asked for the Ambassador's help in finding a "quiet, but quick solution," and suggested that the U.S. could reach out to others to encourage ODIHR to find another candidate. The Ambassador declined, saying the U.S. position on this was clear. Immediately following the meeting, OSCE Head of Presence Robert Bosch telephoned Ambassador Withers to say that ODIHR will move ahead with Glover's appointment, believing that Albania has no grounds or authority on which to reject the head of an Election Observation Mission.

GOA Objection Comes Straight From the Top  
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15. (C) COMMENT: Basha's uncompromising stand echoes that heard by the British charge, who demarched Basha on April 29. Basha said he had also spoken to Greek PM Karamanlis and the German Ambassador about the issue as well. Basha's talking points were well rehearsed, but can't disguise the fact that all of the GOA objections to Glover likely stem from a longtime PM Berisha grudge against Glover because she was the head of ODIHR at the time of the rigged 1996 presidential elections - one of the worst black marks on Berisha's long political career. The GOA stand also reflects another Berisha tendency - his belief that he must control each and every aspect of the upcoming elections, including those mandated to assess and comment upon them.

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WITHERS